

**Text by Mimmo Di Marzio**

Il palcoscenico grottesco di Accardi/The grotesque stage of Accardi

As Salvador Dalì used to say, the true aim of the artist is in “systematically creating confusion in order to absolutely discredit the real world”. A true mission that the Catalan master used to perpetrate not only while conceiving a work, but also in his daily activities, and that made him say that a good painter should be able to paint a pear even in the middle of a robbery or a tumult. The surrealism of daily life - also dear to Dino Buzzati, who thinks that “in the beginning it is always the dream” - is at the basis of the artistic research of Angelo Accardi, a painter from Sapri, in the Campania region, a birthplace that surely influenced his almost obsessive investigation of archetypes and appropriation art.

In the beginning is painting, and in his case, a way of expression that once again uses figuration as a tool of narration and, at the same time, of introspection into the collective unconscious. The themes chosen for his “misplaced” series and the “blend” works are enigmatic representations apparently charged with grotesque elements. True “rebuses” – one could say – where the subject and the representation of the “location” create space and time ambiguities, thus disorienting the spectator. The irony, but also a slight bewilderment are the emotions in the background of the artist’s storyboards, a consistent expression of a storyline, almost a series, where each painting adds a piece of the puzzle. Some leitmotifs characterize Accardi’s work, in a chain of occurrences “out of place” (exactly) that take place or threaten to happen, in a time always suspended between realism and fiction. The stage of his painting alternates between indoor and outdoor contexts: the former always referring to art places, such as museums, galleries or historical theatres. The latter, instead, are placed in the common urban daily life of western megalopolises, the same common daily life that in the collective and media imagination appears more and more exposed to unknown catastrophes.

In Accardi’s paintings, though, the obscure menace takes zoomorphic shape – now an ostrich, now a rhino – ancestral creatures that appear in the same field of vision of the scene and determine a narrative short-circuit. The “misplaced”, that is the process of “discrediting the real world” (as Dalì would put it), is in some works further fed by the presence of subjects taken from the universe of comics and animation movies, such as the little buggers “The Minions”, paladins of a dangerous virtual evilness. The “creatures” by Pablos are here an integral part of the representation or, as in the animation movies, are the fruit of cinematographic virtuosity that combines reality and imagination, narration and dream.

However, the spectator wonders to which solutions Accardi’s puzzles are hinting at, when they are forever and always dotted with mentions and references to the History of Art, as if the real target of his painted hallucinations were the western culture. The artist himself defines his art as a “conceptual painting”, using an adjective that goes back to other cultural seasons and is usually in antithesis with the so-called figurative art. A superficial antithesis, would Sgarbi surely say, considering the immense symbolic universe that has pervaded painting since the Middle Ages. For example, the naturalistic element (the animals) that are always present in Accardi’s painting. An element that has been used several times by artists either as a tool to exorcize evil or as a positive allegory and catharsis in socio-religious representations. In his well-known “Annunciazione/Annunciation”, Lorenzo Lotto put at the centre of the scene a cat (not a dog) as an infernal symbol representing the flight of the Devil in front of the heavenly Messenger. Secular symbolism of animals during the Renaissance has extraordinary examples in Leonardo’s paintings, such as the well-known “Dama con l’Ermellino/Lady with an Ermine”. Here the artist puts together the noblewoman Cecilia and a small snow-white predator, which in the medieval bestiaries symbolized virtues of purity, authenticity and placidity, as well as a connection with nobility and regality**.**

**Also in contemporary art animals keep a symbolic or even mystical meaning, for example in the representations by the “shaman” Joseph Beuys; in the performances by the Viennese Actionism artist Hermann Nitsch; in the stuffed tigers and wolves by Cai Guo-Quiang; in Maurizio Cattelan’s stuffed horses; in the dead stray dogs by Jan Fabre, up to the dissected sharks by Damien Hirst. In Accardi’s work the animals barge into the scene and recall the Jungian archetype that in the dream vision is always revealing of truth, in the awareness that Life doesn’t belong only to man, in fact “animal life was precursory to human life and animals were the closest companions to man both in reality and fantasy”**. The artist forcefully represents the ostrich, a menacing animal that in the psychoanalytical bestiary symbolizes the irrational fear for “the invisible death coming from above”; it is a concept later revisited by Alfred Hitchcock in his well-known movie “Birds”.

In his strong post-surrealist artistic view, Accardi also involuntary draws from the imaginary universe of Max Ernst, who for a long time identified himself with a bird and in 1929, invented his alter ego “Loplop, Superior of Birds”. In Ernst’s metamorphosis, the birdman becomes a mythical figure that emerges from the primordial matter and determines the world’s fate. Taking this image to today’s world, we can observe the obsessive presence of the ostrich as an incoming menace on modernity and at the same time as a synonym of catharsis. It is a catharsis that in order to happen can only dig its claws into History, its symbols and its images. What location is then more ideal as a crime scene than a museum, the “cathedral of the third millennium”, that has seen the box become more important than its content.

However, Accardi’s works balances itself between dramatic force and irony, transcending into pop art. In such a way that the creatures of its “misplaced” works – to which are added funny yellowish comics – often seem fragments that are decontextualized from their web reality, a mix (better a “blend”) of apparently nonsensical images. They are, in fact, *out of place* as they were the urinal by Duchamp or the soup cans by Andy Warhol.